Nixon's Comments on Manson Trial

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DENVER, Aug. 3 (UPI)—A text of President Nixon's remarks to newsmen on the Charles Manson trial:

"As we look at the situation today I think the main concern that I have is the attitudes that are created among many of our younger people and also older people as well in which they tend to glorify and to make heroes out of those who engage in criminal activities. This is not done intentially by the press. It is not done intentionally by radio and television, I know. It is done perhaps because people want to read or see that kind of story.

"I noted, for example, the coverage of the Charles Manson case when I was in Los Angeles. Front page every day in the papers. It usually got a couple of minutes in the evening news. Here is a man who was guilty, directly or indirectly, of eight murders without reason. (The intent of the President's remarks was clarified by Ronald L. Ziegler in a subsequent briefing.)

"Here is a man yet, who, as far as the coverage was concerned appeared to be rather a glamorous figure, glamorous to the young people whom he had brought into his operations, and, also, another thing that was noted was the fact that two lawyers in the case—two lawyers who were, as anyone who could read any of the stories could tell—who were guilty of the most outrageous, contemptious actions in the courtroom and who were ordered to jail overnight by the judge, seem to be more the oppressed and the judge seemed to be the villain.

"Let us understand, all judges are not heroes. All policemen are not heroes. And all those charged with crime are not guilty. But let us well understand too, that the system—the system in which we protect the rights of the innocent, in which the guilty man receives a fair trial and gets the best possible defense — that system must be preserved.

"And unless we stand up for the system, unless we see that order in the courtroom is respected, unless we quit glorifying those who deliberately disrupt, and unless we begin to recognize that when a judge necessarily, after intense provocation, must hold individuals in contempt of court that judge is justified, that he is acting in our behalf, then the system will break down. The innocent will suffer, but more important or just as important, I should say, the guilty will suffer as well because in a society without law the guilty then have no trials.

"I add finally this point that on the other side of the coin, certainly, we find that our press and the media are doing a very necessary job in alerting the American people to the dangers of narcotics and drugs and our young people, the necessity for a program of law and order and justice, and all of this is part of this program that we are attempting to talk about today.

"I simply summarize it in this way: the federal government will act as forcefully as we can to the extent that we can, recognizing that the primary responsibility is in the states and local community.

"As (Colorado) Governor Love will tell you, the states and the local communities are trying to upgrade their law enforcement, upgrade it not only in terms of the enforcement of the law but in the quality of the enforcement and the respect of the law, laws that deserve respect.

"But in the final analysis, unless the American people have within their hearts a respect for the system, the system of law and order and justice which we have inherited from over hundreds of years, then anything that we do at the government level will not be successful.

"It is that system that is now under attack in so many areas.

"So we can be concerned about those charged with crime, we can be concerned about any evidence that those who are enforcing the law are going beyond their powers. But above all, let us remember that this system of law and order and justice must be preserved and we must speak up for it. We must come to its defense and we must not consider that those, the judges, the police and the others who are simply doing their duty, that they are the villains and that those who are provoking them are always in the right."

Associated Press

President Nixon is flanked by Gov. John A. Love of Colorado (right) and Attorney General John N. Mitchell as he delivers a statement in Denver criticizing press coverage of the Sharon Tate murder trial in Los Angeles.